

Address by
Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey
Vice President of the United States

Before
Edward R. Murrow
Center of Public Diplomacy
Medford, Massachusetts
December 6, 1965



"Ed Murrow understood, as well as any man in our century, the responsibility—and the power for good—of modern mass communication. He understood the relationship of that power to our open society."



When President Johnson awarded Ed Murrow the Medal of Freedom—the highest civilian decoration this nation has to bestow—the President's words summed up his career:

"A pioneer in education through mass communications, he has brought to all his endeavors the conviction that truth and personal integrity are the ultimate persuaders of men and nations."

Truth . . . and personal integrity.

That was the legacy of Edward R. Murrow.

The man whom we honor today would approve of the educational innovation we inaugurate here: The Center of Public Diplomacy.

The Center's Purpose

He would approve of the concept of the Center: to bring together professors, foreign correspondents, government officials, and graduate students for a probing exchange of views on the uses of public diplomacy.

He would approve of the Center being located amidst the great universities of the Boston area.

He would approve of the Center being here at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy—the first graduate school of international relations established in the United States.

His only objection would be to the fact that the Center has been named after himself.

For Ed Murrow was one of the most selfless celebrities of our generation. In both broadcasting and government—two public professions in which there is no surplus of modesty—he remained to the end a totally unpretentious person, modest, and even shy.

He was idolized by his fellow broadcasters and at one point something close to a Murrow cult began to emerge. When a network official felt it was going a bit too far, and announced that he was forming a "Murrow Isn't God Club," Ed promptly wrote to him, and applied for a charter membership.

Courage and Principle

Edward R. Murrow was a man, too, of courage and principle.

On one occasion, when a fellow broadcaster was attacked by a group of super-patriots, the man suddenly found himself on one of TV's infamous blacklists. Murrow promptly gave the man 7,500 dollars to hire attorney Louis Nizer and initiate the libel suit that eventually cleared his name. "I'm not making a personal loan to you," said Murrow. "I am investing this money in America."

Great Reporter

But if there is any special way that Ed Murrow would want to be remembered it would be expressed by the simple word: reporter.

Though he never would have admitted it, he virtually created radio and television reporting as we know it today.

Who can forget the drama of that solemn dateline: "This . . . is London?"

For when he said: "This . . . is London"—it suddenly *was* London.

It was the real London—and he had suddenly taken us there . . . out into the noisy terror of the streets, and down into the quiet fear of the bomb shelters.

We no longer simply *heard* about the war from our radios. We were made spectators at the scene. When he stood on a London rooftop during a Nazi raid, and said: "The English die with great dignity," it became more than merely news. We stood there on that rooftop with him, and we sensed that dignity.

Ed Murrow's war-time broadcasts were a whole new dimension in news reporting.

It was a dimension he was to broaden all during the rest of his life.

The Scene of the Action

He often said in later years that broadcasting—both in radio and television—was essentially a *transportation* medium. It was not meant merely to inform. It was meant to carry the audience to the scene itself.

That is why Ed Murrow risked his life in 25 bombing missions over Germany. That is why he sailed up the English Channel in a minesweeper. That is why he stood in the horror of Buchenwald on the very day it was liberated.

For to Ed Murrow, to *report* . . . meant to be *there*.

To us now in 1965—all this may seem routine and obvious.

But Edward R. Murrow, as much as any single man in his time, made it all possible. As a mourning colleague put it at the time of his death, "He was an original and we shall not see his like again."

Communicator to the World

President Kennedy's appointment of Ed Murrow as director of the United States Information Agency was widely applauded.

A few people were surprised that Edward R. Murrow should turn his back on all the gold and glamour of Madison Avenue and take on the headaches of a much maligned and misunderstood government agency. But they did not know Ed Murrow.

He had been asked by the President to serve—and believing that the public interest must come first, he was ready to serve. "Besides," as he told a friend later. "I had been criticizing bureaucrats all my adult life, and it was my turn to try."

The fact is that he had been in public life ever since he was graduated from college, as a pioneer in that new and powerful establishment that has been aptly called "the fourth branch of government"—the American press.

The appointment was a brilliant one. Ed Murrow understood, as well as any man in our century, the responsibility—and the power for good—of modern mass communication. He understood the relationship of that power to our open society.

The Open Society

He knew that the United States, as any open society, is a house with transparent walls. He knew that people who live in an open society should tell the truth about themselves.

In an open society as ours, the first principle of our public morality is that truth should be told.

As Lincoln once said:

" . . . falsehood, especially if you have got a poor memory, is the worst enemy a fellow can have."

Propaganda, to be effective, must be believed. To be believed, it must be credible. To be credible, it must be true. If it is not, in the end it will not stand up.

The evil genius Joseph Goebbels taught us unfounded propaganda can be effective only if the big lie is so bold and monstrous as to appear uninventable. In an open socie-



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ty, people are incapable of believing that anyone could be capable of such perversity. A propagandist such as Goebbels can enjoy temporary triumphs—in a totalitarian society. In a free society, the shallowness of his creed will be exposed.

Today, the whole world can see what is going on in this global goldfish bowl that is the United States. We have a candid free press. And American magazines, films, and television shows, for better or worse, go virtually everywhere overseas.

In this kind of open society, it is futile for a government to put out false propaganda. There are too many non-governmental sources of information available to refute it.

The public official's words, as well as his actions, are inescapably subject to the searing scrutiny of the reporter, the pundit and the scholar.

An Age of Travel

This includes the scrutiny of hundreds of foreign correspondents who are reporting back to their own nations every day. It includes the scrutiny of 80,000 foreign students, all of whom are writing home and most of whom will eventually be going home, to tell family and friends what America is really like.

Three and a half million American tourists go abroad every year. A million American military personnel and their dependents are stationed around the world. Over 30,000 American missionaries are scattered around the globe.

The Chorus of American Voices

Each of these Americans becomes a kind of individual USA to every person he meets overseas.

There is, then, not just one official Voice of America coming out of Washington. There is a whole, gigantic Chorus of Voices of America—a chorus of literally millions—who carry the story of the United States abroad. But this chorus is not under the baton of any minister of propaganda. Each American tells his own story—reflecting his own understanding of America.

The diversity of American life is represented in the picture presented to the world.

Citizen Diplomats

But in an era where diplomacy is practiced by private individuals as well as government officials, new responsibilities arise for all.

For the businessman who conducts negotiations abroad with foreign governments; for the scholar or writer lecturing in foreign lands; for the artist or scientist attending international festivals or conferences, there is an obligation to know one's country, to give an objective analysis, to be an effective advocate. (And, might I add, to do this, we must know major languages of the world, which our educational system must be equipped to teach).

Ed Murrow excelled as a reporter because he knew the world which he was reporting. If the citizen diplomat is to excel he must know his country and the world he is addressing.

As one who understood the effect of the communications revolution on diplomacy in our time, Edward R. Murrow would rejoice that "public diplomacy" will now be the object of continuing study and reflection by serious students and scholars.

If four decades of public diplomacy have disappointed those who saw in Woodrow Wilson's "open diplomacy" the solution to all international disputes, it remains today—far more so than in Wilson's time—an important part of international relations.

America's Responsibilities

In the United States two decades of world leadership have enhanced its importance. The exposure of Americans to foreign affairs has multiplied dramatically. Our military and political commitments around the world, our participation in hundreds of international organizations, the expansion of the Foreign Service, the development of the foreign aid agency and the Peace Corps have placed more Americans in a diplomatic role than was conceivable twenty years ago.

The enlargement of our foreign affairs machinery has been accompanied by a vastly enlarged public market for information on foreign affairs.

The result is that scholars and businessmen, labor leaders and foundation executives—and the average American citizen, too—are more deeply concerned and more vocal on international affairs than ever before.

Advocacy or Dissent

As recent events have shown, American citizens today do not restrict their foreign affairs concerns to detached criticism of governmental action. They initiate public programs and public protests favoring one course of action or deriding another. They advocate freely and they dissent freely.

For those of us in government, John Stuart Mill's advice is as valid today as when uttered a century ago:

"We can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavoring to stifle is a false opinion; and if we were sure, stifling it would be an evil still."

And, thus, we must prize both advocacy and dissent.

Without the right of dissent, the free debate essential to an enlightened consensus is impossible.

Congress' Participation

Oftentimes the views of the American people will be expressed through the Congress, which can exercise great influence on the conduct of foreign relations—through resolutions and speeches as well as through the power of confirmation and of controlling expenditures. In conducting affairs of state at an important international conference, an American Secretary of State may find that a Congressional resolution or a Senate committee investigation may determine the setting for action far more than any decision taken by the President of the United States. Congressional participation in diplomacy is now well-accepted. But what precise role it is best suited to play remains a disputed issue—one which will merit the attention of scholars of this center of public diplomacy.

For my part, I do not fear the encroachments of Congress on the conduct of diplomacy. It is possible that during the first half of the century there did occur in Western societies a "functional derangement between the governed and the governors," an assumption by popular legislatures of powers they were ill-equipped to exercise in the field of international affairs.

Today under our Presidential system an American President has the authority and the power he needs to determine the course of foreign policy.

Modern communications technology has aided what the Constitution intended—that the President take the lead in formulating and executing foreign policy. Strong Presidential leadership—combined with independent Congressional initiatives—is what is needed in the age of public diplomacy.

When this is present—as it is today—there need be little fear of excessive Congressional intervention.

And public diplomacy, however important it is destined to become, is not likely to supersede private diplomacy.

The Communications Revolution

But the importance of public diplomacy has been enhanced by the communications revolution of our time. This has provided us with an electronic means of multiplying the human mind. We can today literally reach out and communicate—simultaneously—with millions of other minds.

One simple invention—the transistor radio—may have had more psychological impact on the world than any other single invention in the past century.

For the transistor radio—which in this country we still regard as a kind of toy—has suddenly become an immensely significant political instrument.

People everywhere today—on the plains and paddies of Asia; on the rolling grasslands of Africa; on the high slopes of the Andes—everywhere in our shrunken world, people are now within earshot of a transistor radio.

What is more, most of these people today, in the nearly 50 new nations that have erupted onto the political scene since the end of World War II, have the franchise. Their village views are backed up by their village votes.

These people in the remote villages of the world may not be literate in the traditional sense. But they *are* politically conscious. They are in touch. They know what is going on. And they will help shape the future of mankind.

Through their village radios, they can now pick and choose from the world's political opinions.

What is true of the village transistor radio of today will be true of the village television set of tomorrow. Television is already in more than 90 countries of the world. It is now the fastest growing medium of communication on earth.

What does all this really mean?

It means that the communications explosion has vastly enlarged the role of public diplomacy. This is the instrument the Edward R. Murrow Center is going to study.

Fulfilling Great Dreams

May it always be an instrument, in our country, for truth. May it always be an instrument used for man's betterment and emancipation.

In the words of Ed Murrow:

"If truth must be our guide then dreams must be our goal. To the hunger of those masses yearning to be free and to learn, to this sleeping giant now stirring, that is so much of the world, we shall say: We share your dreams."



THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

Dear Friend:

You may have missed the attached text.

I would appreciate your sharing with me any thoughts you might have on the subject.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Hubert H. Humphrey".

Hubert H. Humphrey